DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 188 124 CS 005 481

AUTHOR Davidson, Jane L.; Triplett, DeWayne
TITLE Thematic Convergence in Reconstructed Passages in Mapping Activities.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference (29th, San Antonio, TX, November 29-December 1, 1979).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cognitive Processes; Group Activities; Higher Education; Learning Theories; *Reading Comprehension; *Reading Improvement; Reading Instruction; *Reading Processes; *Reading Research; Study Skills; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS Schema Theory

ABSTRACT

A procedure called the Group Mapping Activity has been used to provide for dynamic interaction of students through discussion after reading and to gauge the extent of readers' interactions with text. In using the procedure, however, it was discovered that some students regularly shifted the protagonists in their mapping. A study was undertaken to determine whether maps could be classified and, if so, whether the protagonist shift would occur more frequently in one pattern of classification than in another. Four classifications of maps were developed: (1) "interactive," with a major emphasis on interactions between and relationships among characters in a passage; (2) "identification," with a major emphasis on one character; (3) "linear," with a major emphasis on the sequence of events; and (4) "miscellaneous." A short story was presented to 59 college students by means of the Directed Reading-Thinking Activity. The students then retold the story in writing and then mapped their perceptions of the story. The results revealed that maps classified as "interactive," "identification," and "linear" could be determined, and that the protagonist shift occurred most frequently in the maps classified as "identification." Readers who drew identification maps perceived the protagonist (or shifted protagonist) as being most important to the story. The findings also revealed that readers who shifted the protagonist when they drew their maps had not shifted the protagonist in their written retellings of the story. (FL)

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THEMATIC CONVERGENCE IN RECONSTRUCTED PASSAGES IN MAPPING ACTIVITIES

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Jane L. Davidson
DeWayne Triplett
119 Graham Hall
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, IL 60115

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THEMATIC CONVERGENCE IN RECONSTRUCTED PASSAGES IN MAPPING ACTIVITIES

by

Jane L. Davidson and DeWayne Triplett
Northern Illinois University

The current interest in studying the process of comprehension has led investigators in numerous directions, such as, studies involving the reader's interaction with text and analysis of discourse. A major implication from studies is the need for instructional strategies which maximize the reader's comprehension of text. A reader who can retell a passage may or may not be able to comprehend the passage. The value of having students actively involved in the reading and thinking process has been urged by reading authorities (Henderson, 1977; Huey, 1908; Russell, 1964; Stauffer, 1980). Opportunities for discussion before and after reading encourage different kinds of thinking. "When discussions vary in the story dimensions considered, when different kinds of thinking processes are encouraged, and when they become true occasions for dialogue, then students have a stimulating thinking experience (Hall, 1978)."

A procedure called the Group Mapping Activity (Davidson and Bayliss, 1978) provides for dynamic interaction through discussion after reading. Mapping was defined by Hanf (1971) as a means of graphically structuring information and was used as a substitute for note taking or outlining. Elements of ideas and concepts provide the basic structure of the map and were indentified by skimming the passage. After reading the selection, relationships between ideas and concepts were drawn on the map from memory.

Davidson and Bayliss (1979) recognized that Hanf's procedure involved not only recall of information but other higher thought processes as well. They modified the procedure for use as a group activity after reading and called it the Group Mapping Activity. Students within the group mapped their perceptions of the passage and shared their reasons for drawing in particular elements. The sharing atmosphere was intense; questions and responses represented higher levels of thinking. Questions asked by group members were analyzed by means of the Ohio Scales (Wolf, et al., 1967) and were determined to be chiefly interpretive and evaluative type questions. Students interacted with other group members and gained insights about the various processes used by others in mapping their perceptions of the passage read. A puzzling phenomenon which appeared frequently in some of the maps which were drawn indicated that some students shifted the protagonists. There appeared to be some common patterns in other maps.

The purpose of this study was to analyze and classify maps and determine whether the protagonist shift occurred more frequently in any one pattern of classification. The four classifications of maps are as follows:

1. Interactive - the map shows a major emphasis on interactions between and relationships among characters in the passage.

2. Identification - the map shows a major emphasis on one character in the passage.

3. Linear - the map shows a major emphasis on the sequence of events in the passage.

4. Miscellaneous - the map shows fragments or irrelevant elements pertaining to the passage.

Four types of internal elements in the classifications of maps are:

1. Character relationships - elements indicate relationships between and among characters in the passage.

2. Symbolic awareness - elements indicated symbolism or abstract references.

3. Sequence of events - elements identify the sequence of events in the passage.

4. Ancillary characters - elements identify ancillary characters in the passage.

In order to minimize difficulties in literary interpretations for subjects in this study, the Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (Stauffer, 1969) was used in presenting the passage to be read. Squires (1964) found that readers experienced difficulties interpreting literary passages when they failed to grasp the implications of details or made incorrect inferences or failed to defer final judgment until they related to details presented later in a story. He identified the need for readers to obtain all information before making final assessments. The DR-TA is a group problem-solving procedure in which the teacher facilitates the reader's thinking by regulating the amount of material to be read and by asking questions which stimulate their examination of available clues and declaration of purposes for reading. In literature, purposes for reading are stated as predictions or expectations of the development of the story and final outcome. Purposes differ for individual readers, depending on their background of experiences, the experiences of the group, and the content of the material. Stauffer stated, "Purposes for reading represent the key element in versatility" (1969, p. 24). He also stated

that where readers have "become involved in the dynamics of a purpose-setting session, the self-commitment on an intellectual as well as an emotional level has tremendous motivating force" (1969, p. 25). During the DR-TA, the readers skim, scan, and study as they read in order to satisfy their purposes. They check on individual and group purposes as they read and either keep their original predictions or redefine them. Thereby, concepts in the passage may be further developed. Moreover, the group discussion in which predictions were confirmed, discarded, or redefined would insure that subjects participating in the study would have shared understanding of the passage.

The final step of the DR-TA usually involves discussion, further reading, additional study, and writing in order to increase powers of observation, reflection by abstraction, judgment, and reasoning. For the purposes of this study, the Group Mapping Activity was used as the follow-up activity or final step to the DR-TA.

Method

Subjects who participated in the study were 59 undergraduate and graduate students in education enrolled in reading and language arts courses taught by the authors. The short story, "All the Years of Her Life," by Morley Callaghan was presented to all students by means of the Directed Reading-Thinking Activity. After students had completed the reading of the passage, they were instructed to retell the passage in writing. The Group Mapping Activity was explained to the subjects and they were instructed to map their perceptions of the passage. The written retellings and maps were collected by the examiners.

The subjects' written retellings were analyzed for recall of information from the passage, which were parsed according to Stein and Glenn's (1979) story

grammar. It must be noted that: 1) subjects in the study were reading the material at their independent levels of reading achievement; 2) the DR-TA procedure was used to present the material to be read; and 3) the task of written retelling involved immediate recall of information. (Ten written retellings had been arbitrarily selected at random to examine whether the retelling showed the subjects were comprehending at their independent levels of reading achievement. Results of this preliminary investigation showed that the ten subjects had no difficulty in recalling information, and the remaining 49 subjects' written retellings were then examined.) Analysis of the 59 subjects' written retellings showed that all the subjects had no difficulty recalling information. No subject shifted the protagonist on the written retelling of the passage.

Summary of Results

An analysis of the maps yielded the four classifications: Interactive, Identification, Linear, and Miscellaneous. A total of 59 maps was evaluated. Fifty-eight maps were classified in one of the three observed patterns; one map was not decipherable; it was labeled Miscellaneous. Interactive patterns were mapped most frequently. In this category, 23 (.39) maps were classified. Identification patterns were observed next most often with 19 (.32) maps classified in this group. The Linear patterns were observed in 16 (.27) of the maps.

A review of the percent of map classifications showing the protagonist or protagonist shift indicated that a total of 50 (.84) maps identified the protagonist, and eight (.14) maps revealed a protagonist shift. One (.02) map was classified as Miscellaneous.

Of the 23 maps classified Interactive, a total of 22 (.37) identified the protagonist; one map identified a protagonist shift. In the Identification classification, 12 maps (.20) identified the protagonist and seven (.12) identified a protagonist shift. The 16 maps (.27) classified as Linear identified the protagonist.

An analysis of internal elements in maps classified as Interactive, Identification, and Linear was conducted. Internal elements consisted of four basic types: Character Relationships, Symbolic Awareness, Sequence of Events, and Ancillary Characteristics. Analyses of the 58 maps yielded 79 internal elements that were categorized among the three map classifications and the four types of elements. The total of 79 internal elements was distributed among the three map classifications as follows: Interactive, 38; Identification, 25; and Linear, 16. The internal elements were distributed among the four types of elements as follows:

1. Character Relationships: A total of 29 internal elements involved relationships among or between characters. Maps classified as Interactive contained 22 internal elements which showed character relationships. The Identification maps contained seven internal elements which showed character relationships. There were no internal elements of this type in the maps classified as Linear.

2. Symbolic Awareness: A total of 23 internal elements involved symbolic awareness. Maps classified as Interactive contained ten internal elements which showed symbolic awareness. The Identification maps contained 12 internal elements which showed symbolic awareness. There was one internal element of this basic type in the maps classified as Linear.

3. Sequence of Events: A total of 18 internal elements involved the sequence of events. Maps classified as Interactive contained 18 internal elements which showed the sequence of events. The Identification maps contained two internal elements which showed the sequence of events. There were 13 internal elements of this type in the maps classified as Linear.

4. Ancillary Characters: A total of 9 internal elements involved ancillary characters. Maps classified as Interactive contained three internal elements which showed ancillary characters. The Identification maps contained four internal elements related to ancillary characters. There were two internal elements of this type in the maps classified as Linear.

Discussion

Results of the study suggest that maps can be analyzed and classified as Interactive, Identification, or Linear. The protagonist shift appeared most frequently in the maps classified as Identification. Readers who drew Identification maps perceived the protagonist (or shifted-protagonist) as being most important. The internal elements in these maps represented strong emphasis on symbolic references (i.e. hardships, emotions) as well as emphasis on the protagonists' (or shifted-protagonists') relationships with other major characters in the passage.

Readers who shifted the protagonist when they drew their maps had not shifted the protagonist in their written retelling of the passage. As one subject commented, "I know what the story is about, but I don't care. The mother in the story is really what's important to me." It's as if the subject was saying to the examiners, "If you ask me for recall, I can give you what you want, but my perceptions will remain my own."

Maps classified as Interactive showed that subjects were primarily concerned with interactions and relationships among the characters in the passage. These maps contained internal elements which represented strong emphasis on relationships and interrelationships identified or suggested in the passage. Although symbolic elements were emphasized, they were of less importance.

The results of the examination of maps classified as Interactive or Identification suggested that these readers reacted emotionally as well as intellectually to information in the story.

Readers' maps classified as Linear showed little evidence of any emotional involvement, intellectual awareness of relationships among characters, or symbolism in the passage. Their maps provided evidence of primary concern with the sequence of events only.

Maps provide a means of gaining additional insights about the ways in which readers organize information which can be accounted for by schema theory. "Schema theory provides a way of integrating our understanding of text with our understanding of the world in general" (Adams and Collins, 1979, p. 21)

The readers in this study demonstrated their abilities to store information in memory and immediately recall it; moreover, the result of analysis of map protocols show that readers' organization of information is selective.

This study is considered exploratory. Further investigation is needed to determine whether individuals are consistent in the types of maps they draw after reading other types of materials. Additional study also needs to be directed toward gaining greater understanding of readers who shift the protagonist as they organize information. One investigation might explore the

long term recall of the reader who shifts the protagonist in order to determine if the reader's personal response to another character is of sufficient strength to blot out accurate recall of the passage. Spiro (1977) discussed conditions for inaccurate recall and suggested that "the likelihood of inaccuracy increases with the degree of interaction with pre-existing cognitive structures. The more one relates discourse to prior knowledge, the greater the assimilation into those structures with the resultant loss of particular identity of the discourse" (p. 139).

The Group Mapping Activity provides a means by which individuals' personal responses to reading can be examined in order to better understand the impact of readers' interaction with text. Adams and Collins point out that, "At the highest level, one has successfully read a passage if one understands it both as it was intended by the author and in terms of its impact on oneself" (Adams and Collins, 1979, p. 1).

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